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The Wright's Chaste Wife.

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The Wright's Chaste Wife,

OR

"A Fable of a wrygȟt that was maryde to a pore
wydows dowtre / the whiche wydow havyng
noo good to geve with her / gave as for
a precyous Johell to hym a Rose
garlond / the whyche sche affermyd
wold never fade while sche
kept truly her wedlok."

A Merry Tale, by Adam of Cobsam,

From a MS. in the Library of the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth, about 1462 *A.D.*

COPIED AND EDITED BY

FREDERICK J. FURNIVALL.

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RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BUNGAY.

PREFACE.

Good wine needs no bush, and this tale needs no Preface. I shall not tell the story of it—let readers go to the verse itself for that; nor shall I repeat to those who begin it the exhortation of the englisher of *Sir Generides*,

> "for goddes sake, or ye hens wende,
> Here this tale unto the ende."—(ll. 3769-70.)

If any one having taken it up is absurd enough to lay it down without finishing it, let him lose the fun, and let all true men pity him. Though the state of morals disclosed by the story is not altogether satisfactory, yet it is a decided improvement on that existing in Roberd of Brunne's time in 1303, for he had to complain of the lords of his day:

> Also do þese lordynges,
> Þe[y] trespas moche yn twey þynges;
> Þey rauys a mayden aȝens here wyl,
> And mennys wyuys þey lede awey þertyl.
> A grete vylanye þarte he dous
> ȝyf he make therof hys rouse [boste]:
> Þe dede ys confusyun,
> And more ys þe dyffamacyun.

The volume containing the poem was shown to me by Mr Stubbs, the Librarian at Lambeth, in order that I might see the version of Sir Gyngelayne, son of Sir Gawain, which Mr Morris is some day, I trust, to edit for the Society in one of his Gawain volumes.[1] Finding the present poem also on the paper leaves, I copied it out the same afternoon, and here it is for a half-hour's amusement to any reader who chooses to take it up.

The handwriting of the MS. must be of a date soon after 1460, and this agrees well with the allusion to Edward the Fourth's accession, and the triumph of the White Rose o'er the Red alluded to in the last lines of the poem. The Garlond,

> It was made . . .
> Of flourys most of honoure,
> Of roses whyte þat wyll nott fade,
> Whych floure all ynglond doth glade. . .
> Vn-to the whych floure I-wys
> The loue of God and of the comonys
> Subdued bene of ryght.

For, that the Commons of England were glad of their Yorkist king, and loved Duke Richard's son, let Holinshed's record prove. He testifies:

"Wherevpon it was againe demanded of the commons, if they would admit and take the said erle as their prince and souereigne lord; which all with one voice cried: Yea, yea. . .

"Out of the ded stocke sprang a branch more mightie than the stem; this Edward the Fourth, a prince so highlie fauoured of the peple, for his great liberalitie, clemencie, vpright dealing, and courage, that aboue all other, he with them stood in grace alone: by reason whereof, men of all ages and degrees to him dailie repaired, some offering themselues and their men to ioepard their liues with him, and other plentiouslie gaue monie to support his charges, and to mainteine his right."

[1] The since printing of the Romance in the Percy Folio MS. Ballads and Romances, (*Lybius Disconius*, ii. 404,) will probably render this unnecessary. (1869.)

Would that we knew as much of Adam of Cobsam as of our White-Rose king. He must have been one of the Chaucer breed,[1] but more than this poem tells of him I cannot learn.

3, *St George's Square, N.W.*,
23 *November*, 1865.

P.S.—There are other Poems about Edward IV. in the volume, which will be printed separately.[2] One on Women is given at the end of the present text.

PP.S. 1869.—Mr C. H. Pearson, the historian of the Early and Middle Ages of England, has supplied me with the immediate original of this story. He says:

"The Wright's Chaste Wife is a reproduction of one of the *Gesta Romanorum*, cap. 69, de Castitate, ed. Keller. The Latin story begins 'Gallus regnavit prudens valde.' The Carpenter gets a shirt with his wife, which is never to want washing unless one of them is unfaithful. The lovers are three Knights (*milites*), and they are merely kept on bread and water, not made to work; nor is any wife introduced to see her lord's discomfiture. The English version, therefore, is much quainter and fuller of incident than its original. But the 'morality' of the Latin story is rich beyond description. 'The wife is holy Mother Church,' 'the Carpenter is the good Christian,' 'the shirt is our Faith, because, as the apostle says, it is impossible to please God without faith.' The Wright's work typifies 'the building up the pure heart by the works of mercy.' The three Knights are 'the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh.' 'These you must shut up in the chamber of penance till you get an eternal reward from the eternal King.' 'Let us therefore pray God,' &c."

With the Wright's Chaste Wife may also be compared the stories mentioned in the Notes, p. 20, and the Ballad "The Fryer well fitted; or

[1] Chaucer brings off his Carpenter, though, triumphant, and not with the swived wife and broken arm that he gives his befooled Oxford craftsman in *The Milleres Tale*. (1869.)

[2] In *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, E. E. Text Soc., 1867.

A Pretty jest that once befel,
How a maid put a Fryer to cool in the well"

printed "in the Bagford Collection; in the Roxburghe (ii. 172); the Pepys (iii. 145); the Douce (p. 85); and in *Wit and Mirth, an Antidote to Melancholy*, 8vo. 1682; also, in an altered form, in Pills to purge Melancholy, 1707, i. 340; or 1719, iii. 325"; and the tune of which, with an abstract of the story, is given in Chappell's *Popular Music*, i. 273-5. The Friar makes love to the Maid; she refuses him for fear of hell-fire.

Tush, quoth the Friar, thou needst not doubt;
If thou wert in Hell, I could sing thee out.

So she consents if he 'll bring her an angel of money. He goes home to fetch it, and she covers the well over with a cloth. When he comes back, and has given her the money, she pretends that her father is coming, tells the Friar to run behind the cloth, and down he flops into the well. She won't help him at first, because if he could sing her out of hell, he can clearly sing himself out of the well; but at last she does help him out, keeps his money because he 's dirtied the water, and sends him home dripping along the street like a new-washed sheep.

THE WRIGHT'S CHASTE WIFE.

[*MS. Lambeth* 306, *leaves* 178-187.]

Alłmyghty god, maker of alle,
Saue you my souereyns in towre & halle,
And send youū good grace !
If ye wyłł a stounde blynne,
Of a story I wyłł begynne,
And telle you alł the cas,
Meny farleyes þat I haue herde,
Ye would haue wondyr how yt ferde ;
Lystyn, and ye schalł here ;
Of a wryght I wyłł you telle,
That some tyme in thys land gan dwelle,
And lyued by hys myster.
Whether that he were yn or owte,
Of erthely man hadde he no dowte,
To werke hows, harowe, nor plowgh,
Or other werkes, what so they were,
Thous wrought he hem farre and nere,
And dyd tham wele I-nough.
Thys wryght would wedde no wyfe,
Butt yn yougeth to lede hys lyfe
In myrthe and oþer melody ;
Ouer alł where he gan wende,
Alł they seyd "welcome, frende,
Sytt downe, and do gla[d]ly."

My sovereigns,
I will tell you a tale
of a wright
of this land,
who, at work, was afraid of no earthly man.
At first he would wed no wife,
[leaf 178, back]
for wherever he went he was welcome ;

but at last he wished

Tyll on a tyme he was wyllyng,
As tyme comyth of alle thyng,
(So seyth the p*ro*fesye,)

to have a spouse to look after his goods.

A wyfe for to wedde & haue
That myght hys goodes kepe and saue,
And for to leue all foly.

A widow near had a fair daughter

Ther dwellyd a wydowe in þat contre
That hadde a doughter feyre & fre;
Of her, word sprang wyde,

true and meek.

For sche was bothe stabyll & trewe,
Meke of maners, and feyr of hewe;
So seyd men in that tyde.

The wryght seyde, "so god me saue,

Her the wright would like to lie by him,

Such a wyfe would I haue
To lye nyghtly by my syde."

and therefore went to her mother

He þought to speke wyth þat may,
And rose erly on a daye
And þyder gan he to ryde.

The wryght was welcome to þe wyfe,
And her saluyd all so blyve,
And so he dyd her doughter fre:

and proposed for the maiden.

For the erand that he for cam̃
Tho he spake, þat good yeman̄;
Than to hym seyd sche:

The mother says she can only give him as a portion

The wydowe seyd, "by heuen kyng,
I may geue wyth her no þing,
(And þat forthynketh me;)

a garland

Saue a garlond I wyll the geue,
Ye schall neu*er* see, whyle ye lyve,
None such in thys contre:

of roses

Haue here thys garlond of roses ryche,
In all thys lond ys none yt lyche,

that will keep its colour [leaf 179]

For ytt wyll eu*er* be newe,
Wete þou wele w*ith*owtyn fable,

while his wife is true,

All the whyle thy wyfe ys stable
The chaplett wolle hold hewe;

And yf thy wyfe vse putry, — but change when she is faithless.
Or tolle eny man to lye her by,
Than wolle yt change hewe,
And by the garlond þou may see,
Fekyll or fals yf þat sche be,
Or ellys yf sche be trewe."
Of thys chaplett hym was fulle fayne, — The wright is delighted with his garland and wife,
And of hys wyfe, was nott to layne;
He weddyd her fulle sone, — marries her and takes her home;
And ladde her home wyth solempnite,
And hyld her brydalle dayes thre.
Whan they home come,
Thys wryght in hys hart cast, — and then begins to think that when he is out at work
If that he walkyd est or west
As he was wonte to done,
"My wyfe þat ys so bryght of ble, — men will try to corrupt his wife.
Men wolle desyre her fro me,
And þat hastly and sone;"
Butt sone he hym byþought — So he plans a crafty room and tower,
That a chambyr schuld be wrought
Bothe of lyme and stone,
Wyth wallys strong as eny stele,
And dorres sotylly made and wele,
He owte framyd yt sone;
The chambyr he lett make fast, — and builds it soon with plaster of Paris,
Wyth plaster of parys þat wyll last,
Such ous know I neuer none;
Ther ys [ne] kyng ne emperoure, — which no one could ever get out of if he once got into it,
And he were lockyn in þat towre,
That cowde gete owte of þat wonne.
Nowe hath he done as he þought,
And in the myddes of the flore wrought
A wondyr strange gyle, — for there was a trapdoor in the middle,
A trapdoure rounde abowte
That no man myght come yn nor owte; — [leaf 179, back]
It was made wyth a wyle,

and if any one only touched it, down he'd go into a pit.

This was to stop any tricks with his wife.

That who-so touchyd yt eny thyng,
In to þe pytt he schuld flyng
Wythyn a lytyll whyle.
For hys wyfe he made that place,
That no man schuld beseke her of grace,
Nor her to begyle.

Just then the town Lord

By þat tyme þe lord of the towne
Hadde ordeynyd tymbyr redy bowne,
An halle to make of tre.

sends for him to build a Hall,

After the wryght the lord lett sende,
For þat he schuld wyth hym lende

(a job for two or three months,)

Monythys two or thre.

and offers to fetch his wife too.

The lord seyd, "woult þou haue þi wyfe?
I wyll send after her blyve
That sche may com to the."

The wryght hys garlond hadde take *wyth* hym̃,
That was bryght and no þing dymme,
Yt wes feyre on to see.

He sees the wright's garland, and asks what it means.

The lord axyd hym as he satt,
"Felowe, where hadyst þou þis hatte
That ys so feyre and newe?"

"Sir, it will

The wryght answerd all so blyue,
And seyd, "syr, I hadde yt wyth my wyfe,
And þat dare me neuer rewe;

tell me whether my wife is false or true;

Syr, by my garlond I may see
Fekyll or fals yf þat sche be,

[1 MS. *of*]

Or[1] yf þat sche be trewe;

and will change its colour if she go wrong."

And yf my wyfe loue a *par*amoure,
Than wyll my garlond vade coloure,
And change wyll yt the hewe."

"I'll try that," thinks the Lord,

The lord þought "by godys myght,
That wyll I wete thys same nyght
Whether thys tale be trewe."

and goes to the wright's wife.

To the wryghtys howse anon he went,
He fonde the wyfe ther-in *pre*sente

That was so bryght and schene; [leaf 180]
Sone he hayled her trewly,
And so dyd sche the lord curtesly:
Sche seyd, "welcome ye be;"
Thus seyd the wyfe of the hows,
"Syr, howe faryth my swete spouse — She asks after her husband,
That hewyth vppon your tre?"
"Sertes, dame," he seyd, "wele, — but the Lord
And I am come, so haue I hele,
To wete the wylle of the;
My loue ys so vppon the cast — declares his own love for her,
That me thynketh my hert wolle brest,
It wolle none otherwyse be;
Good dame, graunt me thy grace — and prays her to grant him his will.
To pley with the in some preuy place
For gold and eke for fee."
"Good syr, lett be youre fare, — She entreats him to let that be,
And of such wordes speke no mare
For hys loue þat dyed on tre;
Hadde we onys begonne þat gle,
My husbond by his garlond myght see;
For sorowe he would wexe woode."
"Certes, dame," he seyd, "naye; — but he presses her,
Loue me, I pray you, in þat ye maye:
For godys loue change thy mode,
Forty marke schall be youre mede — and offers her 40 marks.
Of sylu*er* and of gold[*e*] rede,
And that schall do the good."
"Syr, that deede schall be done; — On this she consents if he'll put down the money.
Take me that mony here anone."
"I swere by the holy rode
I thought when I cam hydder
For to bryng[1] yt all to-gydder, [1 *or* hyng. ? *MS.*]
As I mott broke my heele."
Ther sche toke xl marke — The 40 marks she takes,
Of syluer and gold styff and sterke:

Sche toke yt feyre and welle;
Sche seyd, "in to the chambyr wyth we,
Ther no man schall vs see;
No lenger wyth we spare."
Vp the steyer they gan[1] hye:
The stepes were made so queyntly
That farther myght he nott fare.
The lord stumbyllyd as he went in hast,
He fell doune in to þat chaste
Forty fote and somedele more.
The lord began to crye;
The wyfe seyd to hym in hye,
"Syr, what do ye there?"
"Dame, I can nott seye howe
That I am come hydder nowe
To thys hows þat ys so newe;
I am so depe in thys sure flore
That I ne can come owte att no dore;
Good dame, on me þou rewe!"
"Nay," sche seyd, "so mut y the,
Tyll myne husbond come and se,
I schrewe hym þat yt þought."
The lord arose and lokyd abowte
If he myght eny where gete owte,
Butt yt holpe hym ryght noght,
The wallys were so thycke w*ythyn*,
That he no where myght owte wynne
But helpe to hym were brought;
And e*uer* the lord made euyll chere,
And seyd, "dame, þou schalt by thys dere."
Sche seyd that sche ne rought;
Sche seyd "I recke nere
Whyle I am here and þou art there,
I schrewe herre þat þe doth drede."
The lord was sone owte of her þought,
The wyfe went in to her lofte,

and tells him to go [leaf 180, back] into the secret chamber.

Upstairs he goes,

stumbles,

and pops down 40 feet through the wright's trapdoor.

He prays the good dame to have pity on him.

"Nay," says she, "not till my husband sees you."

The Lord tries to get out, but can't,

and then threatens the wife,

but she doesn't care for that,

and goes away to her work.

[1] MS. *gar*

Sche satte and dyd her dede.
Than yt fell on þat oþer daye,
Of mete and drynke he gan her pr*a*y,
There of he hadde gret nede.
He seyd, "dame, for seynt charyte,
Wyth some mete þou comfort me."
Sche seyd, "nay, so god me spede,
For I swere by swete seynt Iohn*e*,
Mete ne drynke ne getyst þou none
Butt þou wylt swete or swynke;
For I haue both hempe and lyne,
And a betyngstocke full fyne,
And a swyngyll good and grete;
If þou wylt worke, tell me sone."
"Dame, bryng yt forthe, yt schall be done,
Full gladly would I ete."
Sche toke the stocke in her honde,
And in to the pytt sche yt sclang
Wyth a grete hete:
Sche brought the lyne and hempe on her backe,
"Syr lord," sche seyd, "haue þou þat,
And lerne for to swete."
Ther sche toke hym a bonde
For to occupy hys honde,
And bade hym fast on to bete.
He leyd yt downe on the[1] stone,
And leyd on strockes well good wone,
And sparyd nott on to leyne.
Whan þat he hadde wrought a thraue,
Mete and drynke he gan to craue,
And would haue hadde yt fayne;
"That I hadde somewhat for to ete
Now aft*er* my gret swete;
Me thynketh yt were ryght,
For I haue labouryd nyght and daye
The for to plese, dame, I saye,
And therto putt my myght."

Next day the Lord begs for food.

[leaf 181]

"You'll get none from me

unless you sweat for it," says she; "spin me some flax."

He says he will:

she throws him the tools,

the flax and hemp,

and says, "Work away."

[1 ? MS. this.] He does,

lays on well,

and then asks for his food,

for he's toiled night and day.

The wife

The wyfe seyd "so mutt I haue hele,
And yf þi worke be wrought wele
Thou schalt haue to dyne."

gives him meat and drink [leaf 181, back] and more flax,

Mete and drynke sche hym bare,
Wyth a thrafe of flex mare
Of fuⁿᵗ long boundyn lyne.

and keeps him up to his work.

So feyre the wyfe the lord gan praye
That he schuld be werkyng aye,
And nought þat he schuld blynne;
The lord was fayne to werke tho,
Butt hys men knewe nott of hys woo
Nor of þer lordes pyne.

The Steward asks the wright after his Lord,

The stuard to þe wryght gan saye,
"Sawe þou owte of my lord to-daye,
Whether that he ys wende?"
The wryght answerde and seyd "naye;
I sawe hym nott syth yesterdaye;
I trowe þat he be schent."

then notices the garland,

The stuard stode þe wryght by,
And of hys garlond hadde ferly
What þat yt be-mente.

and asks who gave it him.

The stuard seyd, "so god me saue,
Of thy garlond wondyr I haue,
And who yt hath the sent."

"Sir, it will tell me whether my wife goes bad."

"Syr," he seyd, "be the same hatte
I can knowe yf my wyfe be badde
To me by eny other man);
If my floures ouþer fade or falle,
Then doth my wyfe me wrong wyth-alle,
As many a woman can)."

"I'll prove that this very night," says the steward,

The stuard þought "by godes myght,
That schaⁿᵗ I preue thys same nyght
Whether þou blys or banne,"

gets plenty of money, and goes off

And in to hys chambyr he gan gone,
And toke tresure fuⁿᵗ good wone,

And forth he spedde hem than).
Butt he ne stynt att no stone
Tyll he vn-to þe wryghtes hows come — to the wright's house,
That ylke same nygħt.
He mett the wyfe amydde the gate,
Abowte þe necke he gan her take, — takes her round the neck,
And seyd "my dere wyght, — and offers her all
Alł the good þat ys myne — [leaf 182]
I wyll the geue to be thyne — he has, to lie by her that night.
To lye by the all nyght."
Sche seyd, "syr, lett be thy fare, — She refuses,
My husbond wolle wete wyth-owtyn) mare
And I hym dyd that vnryght;
I would nott he myght yt wete
For all the good that I myght gete,
So Ihesus[1] mutt me spede
For, and eny man lay me by, — as her husband would be sure to know of it.
My husbond would yt wete truly,
It ys wythowtyn eny drede."
The stuard seyd "for hym þat ys wrought, — The steward urges her again,
There-of, dame, drede the nogħt
Wyth me to do that dede;
Haue here of me xx marke — and offers her 20 marks.
Of gold and syluer styf and starke,
Thys tresoure schall be thy mede."
"Syr, and I graunt þat to yoū, — She says, "Then don't tell any one,"
Lett no man wete butt we two nowe."
He seyd, "nay, wythowtyn drede."
The stuard þought, 'sykerly
Women beth both queynte & slye.'
The mony he gan her bede; — takes his money,
He þought wele to haue be spedde,
And of his erand he was onredde
Or he were fro hem) I-gone.
Vp the sterys sche hym leyde — sends him up the quaint stairs,

[1] MS. *Ihc*

Tyll he saw the wryghtes bedde :
Of tresoure þought he none ;
He went and stumblyd att a stone ;
In to þe seller he fylle sone,
Downe to the bare flore.
The lord seyd "what deuyll art þou?
And þou hadest falle on me nowe,
Thowe hadest hurt me full sore."
The stuard stert and staryd abowte
If he myght ower gete owte
Att hole lesse or mare.
The lord seyd, "welcome, and sytt be tyme,
For þou schalt helpe to dyght thys lyne
For all thy fers[e] fare."
The stuard lokyd on the knyght,
He seyd, "syr, for godes myght,
My lord, what do you here?"
He seyd "felowe, wyth-owtyn oth,
For o erand we come bothe,
The sothe wolle I nott lete."
Tho cam the wyfe them vn-to,
And seyd, "syres, what do you to,
Wyll ye nott lerne to swete?"
Than seyd þe lord her vn-to,
'Dame, your lyne ys I-doo,
Nowe would I fayne ete :
And I haue made yt all I-lyke,
Full clere, and no þing thycke,
Me thynketh yt gret payne."
The stuard seyd "wyth-owtyn dowte,
And eu*er* I may wynne owte,
I wyll breke her brayne."
"Felowe, lett be, and sey nott so,
For þou schalt worke or eu*er* þou goo,
Thy wordes þou torne agayne,
Fayne þou schalt be so to doo,
And thy good wylle put þerto ;

and lets him tumble through the trapdoor.

"What the devil are you?" says the Lord.

[leaf 182, back]

The steward finds he can't get out;

and wonders why his Lord is there.

"We both came on one errand, man."

The wife asks what they're doing;

the Lord says,

"Your flax is done, and I want my dinner."

The steward says if he ever gets out he'll crack her skull.

But the wife chaffs him,

says he'll soon be glad to eat his words,

As a man buxome and bayne
Thowe schalt rubbe, rele, and spynne, — and unless he rubs and reels,
And þou wolt eny mete wynne, — he'll get no meat.
That I geue to god a gyfte."
The stuard seyd, "then haue I wondyr; — "I'll die for hunger first,
Rather would I dy for hungyr — unhouseled," answers he.
Wyth-owte hosyll or shryfte."
The lord seyd, "so haue I hele,
Thowe wylt worke, yf þou hungyr welle, [leaf 183]
What worke þat the be brought."
The lord satt and dyd hys werke, — The Lord works away,
The stuard drewe in to the derke,
Gret sorowe was in hys þought.
The lord seyd, "dame, here ys youre lyne,
Haue yt in godes blessyng and myne,
I hold yt welle I-wrought."
Mete and drynke sche gaue hym yn, — and gets his food and drink.
"The stuard," sche seyd, "wolle he nott spynne,
Wyll he do ryght noght?"
The lord seyd, "by swete sen Ione,
Of thys mete schall he haue none — None of it will he give to the steward,
That ye haue me hydder brought." — but eats it all up,
The lord ete and dranke fast,
The stuard hungeryd att þe last,
For he gaue hym nought.
The stuard satt all in a stody,
Hys lord hadde forgote curtesy:
Tho[1] seyd þe stuard, "geue me some." [1 MS. *The*]
The lord seyd, "sorowe haue þe morsell or sope
That schall come in thy throte! — and won't give him one crumb:
Nott so much as o crome!
Butt þou wylt helpe to dyght þis lyne, — let him work and earn some for himself.
Much hungyr yt schall be thyne
Though þou make much mone."
Vp he rose, and went therto, — The steward gives in,
"Better ys me þus to doo
Whyle yt must nedys be do."

asks for work; the wife throws it him,

The stuard began fast to knocke,
The wyfe þrew hym a swyngelyng stocke,
Hys mete þerwyth to wyn);
Sche brought a swyngyll att þe last,
"Good syres," sche seyd, "swyngylle on fast;
For no þing that ye blynne."
Sche gaue hym a stocke to sytt vppon,
And seyd "syres, þis werke must nedys be done,
All that that ys here yn."

[leaf 183, back]

and steward and Lord are both spinning away

The stuard toke vp a stycke to saye,
"Sey, seye, swyngyll better yf ye may,
Hytt wyll be the better to spynne."

to earn their dinner,

Were þe lord neuer so gret,
Yet was he fayne to werke for hys mete
Though he were neuer so sadde;
Butt þe stuard þat was so stowde,
Was fayne to swyngelle þe scales owte,
Ther-of he was nott glad.

while the Lord's people cannot make out what has become of him.

The lordys meyne þat were att home
Wyst nott where he was bycome,
They were full sore adrad.

Then the Proctor sees the wright

The proctoure of þe parysche chyrche ryght
Came and lokyd on þe wryght,
He lokyd as he ware madde;
Fast þe proctoure gan hym frayne,

and asks where he got his garland from.

"Where hadest þou þis garlond gayne?
It ys euer lyke newe."

"With my wife;

The wryght gan say "felowe,
Wyth my wyfe, yf þou wylt knowe;
That dare me nott rewe;

and while she is true it will never fade,

For all the whyle my wyfe trew ys,
My garlond wolle hold hewe I-wys,
And neuer falle nor fade;

but if she's false it will."

And yf my wyfe take a paramoure,
Than wolle my garlond vade þe floure,
That dare I ley myne hede."

The proctoure þought, "in good faye — The proctor thinks he'll test this,
That schall I wete thys same daye
Whether yt may so be."
To the wryghtes hows he went, — goes to the wright's wife
He grete þe wyfe wyth feyre entente,
Sche seyd "syr, welcome be ye."
"A! dame, my loue ys on you fast — and declares his love for her;
Syth the tyme I sawe you last;
I pray you yt may so be
That ye would graunt me of your grace
To play w*yth* you in some p*r*iuy place, — he must have her or die.
Or ellys to deth mutt me." [leaf 184]
Fast þe proctoure gan to pray,
And eu*er* to hym̃ sche seyd "naye, — She says nay,
That wolle I nott doo.
Hadest þou done þat dede w*yth* me, — as her husband will know of it by his garland.
My spouse by hys garlond myght see,
That schuld torne me to woo."
The proctoure seyd, "by heuen kyng, — The proctor
If he sey to the any þing
He schall haue sorowe vn-sowte;
Twenty marke I wolle þe geue, — offers her 20 marks.
It wolle þe helpe welle to lyue,
The mony here haue I brought."
Nowe hath sche the tresure tane, — These she takes;
And vp þe steyre be they gane, — they go upstairs,
(What helpyth yt to lye?)
The wyfe went the steyre be-syde,
The proctoure went a lytyll to wyde — and the proctor tumbles into the cellar,
He fell downe by and by.
Whan he in to þe seller felle,
He wente to haue sonke in to helle, — and thinks he is going to hell.
He was in hart full sory.
The stuard lokyd on the knyght,
And seyd "proctoure, for godes myght, — The steward asks him to sit down;
Come and sytt vs by."
The proctoure began to stare,

he doesn't know where he is,

For he was he wyst neuer whare,
Butt wele he knewe þe knyght
And the stuard þat swyngelyd þe lyne.

but asks what the Lord and steward are after there,

He seyd "syres, for godes pyne,
What do ye here thys nyght?"
The stuard seyd, "god geue the care,
Thowe camyst to loke howe we fare,
Nowe helpe þis lyne were dyght."
He stode styll in a gret þought,
What to answer he wyst noght:
"By mary full of myght,"

working the wife's flax;

The proctoure seyd, "what do ye in þis yne
For to bete thys wyfees lyne?

[leaf 184, back]

For Ihesus loue, ffull of myght,"
The proctoure seyd ryght as he þought,

he, the proctor, will never do the like,

"For me yt schall be euyll wrought
And I may see aryght,

it's not his trade.

For I lernyd neuer in lond
For to haue a swyngell in hond
By day nor be nyght."

The steward says, "We're as good as you, and yet

The stuard seyd, "as good as þou
We hold vs that be here nowe,
And lett preue yt be sygh̄t;

have to work for our food."

Yet must vs worke for owre mete,
Or ellys schall we none gete,
Mete nor drynke to owre honde."

The Lord says, "And you'll have to work ere you go."

The lord seyd, "why flyte ye two?
I trowe ye wyll werke or ye goo,
Yf yt be as I vndyrstond."

Abowte he goys twyes or thryes;

They eat and drink, and give the proctor nothing,

They ete & drunke in such wyse
That þey geue hym ryght noght.
The proctoure seyd, "thynke ye no schame,

to his great disgust,

Yheue me some mete, (ye be to blame,)
Of that the wyfe ye brought."
The stuard seyd "euyll spede the soppe
If eny morcell come in thy throte

Butt þou w*yth* vs hadest wrought."
The proctoure stode in a stody — till at last
Whether he myght worke hem by ;
And so to torne hys þought,
To the lord he drewe nere,
And to hym seyd w*yth* myld[*e*] chere,
"That mary mott the spede !"
The proctoure began to knocke, — he too knocks for work,
The good wyfe rawte hym a rocke,
For therto hadde sche nede ;
Sche seyd "whan I was mayde att home,
Other werke cowde I do none
My lyfe ther-wyth to lede."
Sche gaue hym in hande a rocke hynde, — gets a distaff and some winding to do,
And bade hem fast for to wynde
Or ellys to lett be hys dede. — [leaf 185]
"Yes, dame," he seyd, "so haue I hele,
I schall yt worke both feyre & welle
As ye haue taute me."
He wauyd vp a strycke of lyne,
And he span wele and fyne — and spins away well.
By-fore the swyngell tre.
The lord seyd "þou spynnest to grete,
Therfor þou schalt haue no mete,
That þou schalt well see."
Thus þey satt and wrought fast — Thus they all sit and work till the wright comes home.
Tyll þe wekedayes were past ;
Then the wryght, home came he,
And as he cam by hys hows syde — As he approaches he hears a noise,
He herd[1] noyse that was nott ryde — [[1] P MS. *hard*]
Of *per*sons two or thre ;
One of hem knockyd lyne,
A-nothyr swyngelyd good and fyne
By-fore the swyngyll tre,
The thyrde did rele and spynne,
Mete and drynke ther-wyth to wynne,
Gret nede ther-of hadde he.

Thus þe wryght stode herkenyng;
his wife comes to meet him, Hys wyfe was ware of hys comyng,
And ageynst hym went sche.
"Dame," he seyd, "what ys þis dynne?
and he asks what all that noise is about. I here gret noyse here wythynne;
Tell̃ me, so god the spede."
"Why, three workmen have come to help us, dear. "Syr," sche seyd, "workemen thre
Be come to helpe you and me,
Ther-of we haue gret nede;
Who are they?" Fayne would I wete what they were."
The wright sees his Lord in the pit, Butt when he sawe hys lord there,
Hys hert bygan to drede:
To see hys lord in þat place,
He þought yt was a strange cas,
and asks how And seyd, "so god hym spede,
[leaf 185, back] What do ye here, my lord and knyght̃?
Tell̃ me nowe for godes myght̃
he came there. Howe cam thys vn-to?"
The knyght seyd "What ys best rede?
The Lord asks mercy: he is very sorry. *Mer*cy I aske for my mysdede,
My hert ys wondyr wo."
"So am I," says the wright, "to see you among the flax and hemp," "So ys myne, verame*n*t,
To se you among thys flex and hempe,
Full̃ sore yt ruyth̃ me;
To se you in such hevynes,
Full̃ sore myne hert yt doth oppresse,
By god in trinite."
and orders his wife to let the Lord out. The wryght bade hys wyfe lett hym̃ owte,
"No, bother my snout if I do," says the wife, "before his lady sees what he wanted to do with me." "Nay, þen sorowe come on my snowte
If they passe hens to-daye
Tyll̃ that my lady come and see
Howe þey would haue done w*yth* me,
Butt nowe late me saye."
So she sends for the dame to fetch her lord home, Anon sche sent aft*er* the lady bryght̃
For to fett home her lord and knyght,
Therto sche seyd nogh̃t;
Sche told her what they hadde ment,

And of ther purpos & ther intente
That they would haue wrought.
Glad was þat lady of that tydyng;
When sche wyst her lord was lyuyng,
Ther-of sche was full fayne:
Whan sche came vn-to þe steyre abouen,
Sche lokyd vn-to þe seller downe,
And seyd,—þis ys nott to leyne,—
"Good syres, what doo you here?"
"Dame, we by owre mete full dere,
Wyth gret trauayle and peyne;
I pray you helpe þat we were owte,
And I wyll swere w*yth*-owtyn dowte
Neu*er* to come here agayne."
The lady spake the wyfe vn-tylle,
And seyd "dame, yf yt be youre wylle,
What doo thes meyny here?"
The carpentarys wyfe her answerd sykerly,
"All they would haue leyne me by;
Eu*er*ych, in ther manere,
Gold and syluer they me brought,
And forsoke yt, and would yt noght,
The ryche gyftes so clere.
Wyllyng þey were to do me schame,
I toke ther gyftes wyth-owtyn blame,
And ther they be all thre."
The lady answerd her anon,
"I haue thynges to do att home
Mo than two or thre;
I wyst my lord neu*er* do ryght noght
Of no þing þat schuld be wrought,
Such as fallyth to me."
The lady lawghed and made good game
Whan they came owte all in-same
From the swyngyll tre.
The knyght seyd "felowys in fere,
I am glad þat we be here,

and tells her what he and his companions came there for. The lady

looks down into the cellar, and says, "Good sirs, what are you doing?"

"Earning our meat full dear:

help us out, and I'll never come here again."

The lady asks the wife why [leaf 186] the men are there.

The wife says they wanted to lie with her, and offered her gold and silver;

she took their gifts, and there they are.

The lady says she really wants her lord for herself,

and laughs heartily when the three culprits come out.

The Lord says,

By godes dere pyte;
Dame, and ye hadde bene wyth vs,
Ye would haue wrought, by swete Ihesus,
As welle as dyd we."
And when they cam vp abouen
They turnyd abowte and lokyd downe,
The lord seyd, "so god saue me,
Yet hadde I neuer such a fytte
As I haue hadde in þat lowe pytte;
So mary so mutt me spede."
The knyght and thys lady bryght,
Howe they would home that nyght,
For no thyng they would abyde;
And so they went home;
Thys seyd Adam of Cobsam.[1]
By the weye as they rode
Throwe a wode in ther playeng,
For to here the fowlys syng
They hovyd stylle and bode.
The stuard sware by godes ore,
And so dyd the proctoure much more,
That neuer in ther lyfe
Would they no more come in þat wonne
Whan they were onys thens come,
Thys forty yere and fyve.
Of the tresure that they brought,
The lady would geue hem ryght noght,
Butt gaue yt to the wryghtes wyfe.
Thus the wryghtes garlond was feyre of hewe,
And hys wyfe bothe good and trewe:
There-of was he full blythe;
I take wytnes att gret and smal,
Thus trewe bene good women all
That nowe bene on lyve,
So come thryste on ther hedys

"Ah, you'd have worked too if you'd been with us,"

I never had such a turn in my life before, I can tell you."

Then the Lord and lady go home,

as ADAM of COBSAM says. [leaf 186, back] On their way home

they halt,

and the steward and proctor swear they'll never go back for five and forty years.

The lady gives all their money to the wright's wife.

The garland is fresh as ever.

Thus true are all good women now alive!

[1] The letter between the *b* and *a* has had the lower part marked over. But it must mean a long *ſ*.

Whan they mombyȝt on ther bedys
Ther pat*er* n*oster* ryue.

Here ys wretyn a geste of the wryght — Here then is written a tale
That hadde a garlond weȝt I-dyght, — of the Wright and his Garland.
The coloure wyȝt neu*er* fade.
Now god, þat ys heuyn kyng, — God grant us all his blessing,
Graunt vs aȝt hys dere blessyng
Owre hertes for to glade ;
And aȝt tho that doo her husbondys ryght, — and may all true faithful wives
Pray we to Ih*es*u fuȝt of myght,
That feyre mott hem byfalle,
And that they may come to heuen blys, — come to heaven's bliss,
For thy dere m̄oderys loue ther-of nott to mys,
Alle good wyues alle.
Now alle tho that thys tretys hath hard, — and be such
Ih*es*u graunt hem, for her reward,
As trew louers to be — true lovers as the
As was the wryght vn-to hys wyfe — [leaf 187]
And sche to hym duryng her lyfe. — wright and his wife were.
Amen, for charyte. — Amen !

Here endyth the wryghtes p*ro*cesse trewe — Here ends our tale of the Garland
Wyth hys garlond feyre of hewe
That neu*er* dyd fade the coloure.
It was made, by the avyse
Of hys wywes moder wytty and wyse,
Of flourys most of honoure, — which was made of White Roses,
Of roses whyte þat wyȝt nott fade,
Whych floure aȝt ynglond doth glade, — the flowers that gladden all England,
Wyth trewloues medelyd in syght ;
Vn-to the whych floure I-wys
The loue of god and of the comenys — and receive the love of God, and of the Commons too.
Subdued[1] bene of ryght.

Explicit.

[1] May be *subdied ;* the word has been corrected.

NOTES.

The two first of the three operations of flax-dressing described in lines 526–529, p. 15,

> One of hem knockyd lyne,
> A-nothyr swyngelyd good and fyne
> By-fore the swyngyll-tre,
> The thyrde did rele and spynne,

must correspond to the preliminary breaking of the plant, and then the scutching or beating to separate the coarse tow or hards from the tare or fine hemp. Except so far as the *swingle* served as a heckle, the further *heckling* of the flax, to render the fibre finer and cleaner, was dispensed with, though heckles (iron combs) must have been in use when the poem was written—inasmuch as *hekele*, *hekelare*, *hekelyn*, and *hekelynge*, are in the Promptorium, ab. 1440 A.D. Under *Hatchell*, Randle Holme gives a drawing of a heckle.

The lines through the *h*'s in the MS. are not, I believe, marks of contraction. There are no insettings of the third lines, or spaces on changes of subject, in the MS.

For reference to two analogous stories to that of the Poem, I am indebted to Mr Thomas Wright. The first is that of *Constant Duhamel* in the third volume of Barbazan, and the second that of the Prioress and her three Suitors in the Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate, published by the Percy Society, ed. Halliwell.

In the Barbazan tale "the wife is violently solicited by three suitors, the priest, the provost, and the forester, who on her refusal persecute her husband. To stop their attacks she gives them appointments at her house immediately after one another, so that when one is there and stripped for the bath, another comes, and, pretending it is her husband, she conceals them one after another in a large tub full of feathers, out of which they can see all that is going on in the room. She then sends successively for their three wives to come and bathe with her, the bath being still in the same room, and as each is stripped naked in the bath, she introduces her own husband, who dishonours them one after another, one *à l'envers*, with rather aggravating circumstances, and all in view of their three husbands. Finally the latter are turned out of the house naked, or rather well feathered, then hunted by the whole town and their dogs, well bitten and beaten."

(If any one wants to see a justification of the former half of the proverb quoted by Roberd of Brunne,

> Frenche men synne yn lecherye
> And Englys men yn enuye,

let him read the astounding revelation made of the state of the early French mind by the tales in the 3rd and 4th vols. of Barbazan's Fabliaux, ed. 1808.)

The second story, told by Lydgate, is as follows:—A prioress is wooed by "a young knyght, a parson of a paryche, and a burges of a borrow." She promises herself to the first if he will lie for a night in a chapel sewn up in a sheet like a corpse; to the second, if he will perform the funeral service over the knight, and bury him; to the third, if he will dress up like a devil, and frighten both parson and knight. This the burges Sir John does well, but is himself terrified at the corpse getting up: all three run away from one another: the knight falls on a stake, and into a snare set for bucks, and breaks his fore top in falling from the tree; the merchant gets tossed by a bull; the parson breaks his head and jumps into a bramble bush; and the prioress gets rid of them all, but not before she has made the "burges" or "marchaunt" pay her twenty marks not to tell his wife and the country generally of his tricks.—*Minor Poems*, p. 107—117, ed. 1840.

GLOSSARY.

And, 89, 292, if.

Bayne, 348, ready.

Blynne, 4, cease, stop; AS. *blinnan.*

Blyue, 44, 110, 118, speedily.

Bonde, 226, a bund-le; Du. *bondt*, a bavin, a bush of thornes.

Brayne, 342, scull.

Broke 165, enjoy. AS. *brúcan*, Germ. *brauchen.* H. Coleridge.

Brydalle, 71, AS. *brýd-ál*, bride ale, marriage feast.

By, 197, buy.

Chaste, 176, chest, box, pit.

Dowte, 14, fear.

Dyght, 323, 379, prepare, dress.

Fare, 148, 324, going on, wish, project.

Fere, 604, company.

Flyte, 484, wrangle, quarrel; AS. *flít*, strife, wrangling.

Forthynketh, 51, repents, makes sorry; AS. *forþencan*, to despair.

Frayne, 409, ask; AS. *fregnan*, Goth. *fraihnan.*

Gan, 22, did.

Geue to God a gyfte, 351, I make a vow, I promise you, I'll take my oath.

Hele, 140, salvation.

Hovyd, 624, halted, stopt.

Hynde, 508? natty; *hende*, gentle.

I-doo, 335, done, finished.

I-dyght, 644, prepared.

In-same, 602, together.

Layne, 68, hide, conceal.

Lende, 107, stay; ?AS. *landian*, to land, or *lengian*, to prolong.

Leyne, 231, lay, beat.

Lyne, 214, AS. *lín*, flax; ?rope, 246.

Meyne, 403, household.

Myster, 12, trade; Fr. *mestier.*

O, 329, one.

Onredde, 308; AS. *unrét*, *unrót*, uncheerful, sorrowful, or *unréd*, imprudent.

Oþre, 205, second.

Putry, 61, adultery; O.Fr. *puterie*, whoring.

Rawte, 503, reached, gave.

Rewe, 186, have pity.

Rocke, 503, 508; Du. *een Rocke*, *Spinrock*, A Distaffe, or a Spinrock; *Rocken*, To Winde Flaxe or Wool upon a Rock (Hexham). Dan. *rok*, O.N. *rokkr*, G. *rocken*: "a distaff held in the hand from which the thread was spun by twirling a ball below. 'What, shall a woman with a *rokke* drive thee away?'" Digby Mysteries, p. 11 (Halliwell). "An Instrument us'd in some Parts for the spinning of Flax and Hemp." Phillips; for reeling and spinning (l. 529).

Rought, 198, AS. *róhte*, p. of *récan*, to reck, care for.

Ryde, 524, light, small, AS. *geryd*, levis, æquus. Lye.

Ry e, 642, Du. *rijf*, rife, or abundant.

Scales, 401; ? husks, bark, or rind, see *shoves**, in *Swyngylle*, below.

Schent, 258, destroyed; AS. *scendan.*

Stounde, 4, short time,

Strycke, 514, "*Strike of Flax*, is as much as is heckled at one Handful." Phillips.

Swyngylle, 216, "Swingle-Staff, a Stick to beat Flax with," Phil.; AS. *swingele*, a whip, lash. "To *swingle*, to beat; a Term among Flax-dressers." Phillips. Though Randle Holme, Bk. III., ch. viii. No. xxxiii., gives the *Swingle-Tree* of a Coach-Pole (these are made of wood, and are fastened by Iron hooks, stables (*sic*) chains and pinns to the Coach-pole, to the which Horses are fastened by their Harnish when there is more then two to draw the Coach), yet at Chap. vi., § iv., p. 285, col. 1, he says, "He beareth Sable, a *Swingle* Hand erected, Surmounting of a *Swingle* Foot, Or. This is a Wooden Instrument made like a Fauchion, with an hole cut in the top of it, to hold it by: It is used for the clearing of Hemp and Flax from the large broken Stalks or *Shoves, by the help of the said *Swingle* Foot, which it is hung upon, which said Stalks being first broken, bruised, and cut into shivers by a Brake.
S. 3, such erected in Fesse O. born by *Flaxlowe.*
S. 3, such in Pale A., born by *Swingler.*"
(A drawing is given by Holme, No. 4, on the plate opposite p. 285.)
"*Swingowing* is the beating off the bruised inward stalk of the Hemp or Flax, from the outward pill, which as (*sic*) the Hemp or Flax, p. 106, col. 2.
Spinning is to twist the Flax hairs into Yarn or Thrid. *Reeling* is to wind the Yarn of the Wheel Spool on a Reel," p. 107, Col. 2.

Take, 161, deliver.

The, 187, thrive.

Tolle, 62, entice (H. H. Gibbs).

Tre, 105, wood, timber.

Trewloves, 669, either figures like true-lovers' knots, or the imitations of the herb or flower *Truelove*, which is given by Coles as *Herb Paris* (a quatrefoil whose leaves bear a sort of likeness to a true-lovers' knot), and in Halliwell as *one-berry*; but I cannot find that Edward IV. had any such plants on his arms or badge. Knots were often worn as badges, see Edmonston's Heraldry, Appendix, Knots. On the other hand, Willement (Regal Heraldry) notices that the angels attending Richard II. in the picture at Wilton, had collars worked with white roses and broom-buds; and trueloves, if a plant be meant by it, may have been Edward's substitute for the broom (*planta genista*). The Trewloves bear, one, Ar. on a chev. sa., three cinquefoils, or; the other, Ar. on a chev. sa., a quatrefoil of the field.

Vade,[1] 125, 419, fade; Du. *vadden* (Hexham).

Wone, 275, store, quantity.

Wonne, 90, 628, dwelling.

Woode, 153, wild, mad.

Yheue, 491, give.

Yougeth, 20, youth, bachelor's freedom.

[1] The use of the flat *vade* (l. 419, p. 12) within 2 lines of the sharp *fade* (l. 417), corresponds with the flat 'stow*de*,' l. 400, p. 12, riming with 'owte,' l. 401, *badde* with *hatte*, l. 265-6. *Cost*, *brest*, l. 142-3, are careless rimes too.

WOMEN.

[*Lambeth MS.* 306, *leaf* 135.]

Women, women, loue of women,
make bare purs *with* some men,
Some be nyse as a nonne hene,[1]
3it al thei be nat soo.
some be lewde,
some all be schrewde;
Go schrewes wher thei goo.

Sum be nyse, and some be fonde,
And some be tame, y vndirstonde,
And some cane take brede of a manes hande,[2]
Yit all thei be nat soo.
[Some be lewde, &c.]

Some cane part with-outen hire, [leaf 135, back]
And some make bate in eueri chire,
And some cheke mate with oure Sire,
Yit all they be nat so.
Some be lewde,
and sume be schreuede,
go wher they goo.

[1] The Rev. J. R. Lumby first told me of the proverb 'As white as a nun's hen,' the nuns being famous, no doubt, for delicate poultry. John Heywood has in his *Proverbes*, 1562 (first printed, 1546), p. 43 of the Spencer Society's reprint, 1867,

> She tooke thenterteinment of the yong men
> All in daliaunce, *as nice as a Nun's hen.*

The proverb is quoted by Wilson in his *Arte of Rhetorique*, 1553 (Hazlitt's *Proverbs*, p. 69).

[2] For *honde*.

Som be browne, and some be whit,
And some be tender as a ttripe,
And some of theym be chiry ripe,
Yit all thei be not soo.
Sume be lewde,
and some be schrewede,
go wher they goo.

Some of them be treue of love
Beneth þe gerdeH, but nat above,
And in a hode aboue cane chove,
Yit all thei do nat soo.
Some be lewde,
and some be schreude,
go where they goo.

Some cane whister, & some cane crie,
Some cane flater, and some can lye,
And some cane sette þe moke awrie,
Yit all thei do nat soo.
Sume be lewde,
and sume be schreuede,
go where thei goo.

He that made this songe full good,
Came of þe north and of þe sothern blode,
And some-what kyne to Robyn Hode,
Yit all we be nat soo.
Some be lewde,
and some be schrewede,
go where they goo.

Some be lewde, some be [s]chrwde,
Go where they goo.

Explicit.

P.S.—This Poem was printed by Mr Halliwell in *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, vol. i., p. 248, and reprinted by Mr Thomas Wright, at p. 103 of his edition of *Songs and Carols* for the Percy Society, 1847. As, besides minor differences, the reprint has *manne*, and the original *nanne*, for what I read as *nonne*, l. 3, while both have *withowte* for *with oure*, l. 15, and *accripe* for *a ttripe*, l. 21 (see Halliwell's Dictionary, "*accripe*, a herb?"), I have not cancelled this impression. The other version of the song, from Mr Wright's MS. in his text, pp. 89—91, differs a good deal from that given above.

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ADDITIONAL ANALOGUES OF "THE WRIGHT'S CHASTE WIFE."

By W. A. CLOUSTON.

The numerous versions of this old and wide-spread story should be divided into two groups: I. Those in which there is a test of chastity, and the lovers are entrapped; II. Those in which there is no such test, but the suitors are (*a*) entrapped, or (*b*) engaged to perform unpleasant or dangerous tasks.

I. It is probable that some oral version of *The Wright's Chaste Wife* suggested to Massinger the plot of his comedy of *The Picture* (printed in 1630): Mathias, a Bohemian knight, about to go to the wars, expresses to his confidant Baptista, a great scholar, his fears lest his wife Sophia, on whom he doated fondly, should prove unfaithful during his absence. Baptista gives him a picture of his wife, saying:

> "Carry it still about you, and as oft
> As you desire to know how she's affected,
> With curious eyes peruse it. While it keeps
> The figure it has now entire and perfect
> She is not only innocent in fact
> But unattempted; but if once it vary
> From the true form, and what's now white and red
> Incline to yellow, rest most confident
> She's with all violence courted, but unconquered;
> But if it turn all black, 'tis an assurance
> The fort by composition or surprise
> Is forced, or with her free consent surrendered."

On the return of Mathias from the wars, he is loaded with rich gifts by Honoria, the wife of his master Ferdinand, king of Hungary; and when he expresses his desire to return to his fair and virtuous wife, Honoria asks him if his wife is as fair as she, upon which he shows her the picture. The queen resolves to win his love—merely to gratify her own vanity—and persuades him to remain a month at court. She then despatches two libertine courtiers to attempt the virtue of Mathias' wife. They tell her Mathias is given to the

society of strumpets—moreover, not young, but old and ugly ones; so poor Sophia begins to waver. Meanwhile the queen makes advances to Mathias, which at first he rejects; but afterwards, seeing a change in his wife's picture, he consents, when the queen says she will think over it and let him know her decision. Sophia, at first disposed to entertain her suitors' proposals, on reflection determines to punish their wickedness; and, pretending to listen favourably to one of them, she causes him to be stripped to his shirt and locked in a room, where he is compelled to spin flax (like the suitors in our story), or go without food. The other fares no better, and the play concludes with the exposure of the libertines to the king and queen, their attendants, and the lady's husband.

The 69th chapter of the continental *Gesta Romanorum* (translated by Swan) is to the following effect:[1] A carpenter receives from his mother-in-law a shirt, having the wonderful quality of remaining unsoiled so long as he and his wife were faithful to each other. The emperor, who had employed him in the erection of a palace, is astonished to observe his shirt always spotless, and asks him the cause of it; to which he replies, that it is a proof of his wife's unsullied virtue. A soldier, having overheard this, sets off to attempt the wife's chastity, but she contrives to lock him in a room, where she keeps him on bread and water. Two other soldiers successively visit her on the same errand, and share their comrade's fate. When the carpenter has finished his job, he returns home and shows the unsullied shirt to his wife, who in her turn exhibits to him the three soldiers, whom he sets free on their promising to reform their ways.

The general resemblance of our story to this *Gesta* version does not, I think, render it therefore certain, or even probable, that the latter is the source whence it was derived; since a test similar to that of the Garland (for which a shirt is substituted in the *Gesta*) occurs both in the Indian original and in an intermediate Persian form, which is of Indian extraction.

In the celebrated Persian story-book, Nakhshabí's *Túti Náma* (Tales of a Parrot), written about A.D. 1306, the wife of a soldier, on his leaving home to enter the service of a nobleman, gives him a nosegay which, she tells him, would remain in full bloom while she was faithful to him. After some time, the nobleman inquired of the soldier how he managed to procure a fresh nosegay every day in mid-winter, and was informed that its perennial bloom betokened his

[1] Here given somewhat more fully than in the additional postscript to the Preface to the second edition of *The Wright's Chaste Wife*, 1869.

wife's chastity. The nobleman sends one of his cooks to try to form an intimacy with the soldier's wife, but she craftily entraps him. A second cook is despatched to learn the fate of the first, and meets with a similar reception. At last the nobleman himself sets off with his attendants—among whom was the soldier—to visit the chaste wife. He is received by her with great courtesy, and his two cooks, dressed as female slaves, are made by the wife to wait upon him at supper. The happy soldier then returns his wife the nosegay, fresh and blooming as ever.

The oldest form of the story yet known is found in the great Sanskrit collection entitled *Kathá Sarit Ságara*[1] (Book II., ch. 13): A merchant named Guhasena is compelled to leave his wife, Devasmitá, for a season, on important business matters. The separation is very painful to both, and the pain is aggravated by fears on the wife's part of her husband's inconstancy. To make assurance doubly sure, Siva was pleased to appear to them in a dream, and giving them two red lotuses, the god said to them: "Take each of you one of these lotuses in your hand; and if either of you shall be unfaithful during your separation, the lotus in the hand of the other shall fade, but not otherwise." The husband set out on his journey, and arriving in the country of Katáha he began to buy and sell jewels there. Four young merchants, learning the purport of his lotus and the virtue of his wife, set off to put it to the proof. On reaching the city where the chaste Devasmitá resided, they bribe a female ascetic to corrupt the lady, so she goes to her house, and adopting the device of the little she-dog—see ch. xxviii. of Swan's *Gesta Romanorum*,[2]—which she pretends is her own co-wife in a former birth, re-born in that degraded form, because she had been over-chaste, and warns Devasmitá that such should also be her fate if she did not "enjoy herself" during her husband's absence. The wise Devasmitá said to herself: "This is a novel conception of duty; no doubt this woman has laid a treacherous snare for me," and so she said to the ascetic: "Reverend lady, for this long time I have been ignorant of this duty, so procure me an interview with some agreeable man." Then the

[1] 'Ocean of the Streams of Story,' written in Sanskrit verse, by Somadeva, towards the end of the 11th century, after a similar work, the *Vrihat Ka'há*, 'Great Story,' by Gunadhya, 6th century, of which no copy has hitherto been discovered. A complete translation of Somadeva's work, by Professor C. H. Tawney, with useful notes of variants and derivatives of the tales, has lately been published, in two vols., large 8vo, at Calcutta.

[2] Taken into the *Gesta*, probably from the *Disciplina Clericalis* of P. Alfonsus. The incident is also the subject of a *fabliau*, and occurs in all the Eastern versions of the *Book of Sindibád*.

ascetic said: "There are residing here some young merchants, who have come from a distant country, so I will bring them to you." The crafty old hag returns home delighted with the success of her stratagem. In the meantime Devasmitá resolves to punish the four young merchants. So calling her maids, she instructs them to prepare some wine mixed with *datura* (a stupefying drug), and to have a dog's foot of iron made as soon as possible. Then she causes one of her maids to dress herself to resemble her mistress. The ascetic introduces one of the young libertines into the lady's house in the evening, and then returns home. The maid, disguised as her mistress, receives the young merchant with great courtesy, and, having persuaded him to drink freely of the drugged wine till he became senseless, the other women strip off his clothes, and, after branding him on the forehead with the dog's foot, during the night push him into a filthy ditch. On recovering consciousness he returns to his companions, and tells them, in order that they should share his fate, that he had been robbed on his way home. The three other merchants in turn visit the house of Devasmitá, and receive the same treatment. Soon afterwards the pretended devotee, ignorant of the result of her device, visits the lady, is drugged, her ears and nose are cut off, and she is flung into a foul pond. In the sequel, Devasmitá, disguised in man's apparel, proceeds to the country of the young libertines, where her husband had been residing for some time, and, going before the king, petitions him to assemble all his subjects, alleging that there are among the citizens four of her slaves who had run away. Then she seizes upon the four young merchants, and claims them as her slaves. The other merchants indignantly cried out that these were reputable men, and she answered that if their foreheads were examined they would be found marked with a dog's foot. On seeing the four young men thus branded, the king was astonished, and Devasmitá thereupon related the whole story, and all the people burst out laughing, and the king said to the lady: "They are your slaves by the best of titles." The other merchants paid a large sum of money to the chaste wife to redeem them from slavery, and a fine to the king's treasury. And Devasmitá received the money, and recovered her husband; was honoured by all men, returned to her own city, and was never afterwards separated from her beloved.

Tests of chastity such as those in the above stories are very common in our old European romances. In *Amadis de Gaul* it is a garland; in *Perce Forest* it is a rose, which, borne by a wife or a

maiden of immaculate virtue, retains its bloom, but withers if the wearer is unchaste. In *Tristram, Perceval, La Morte d'Arthur*, and *Ariosto*, the test is a cup, the wine in which is spilled by the unfaithful lover or wife who attempts to drink from it. In one of the *fabliaux* of the northern minstrels of France the test is a mantle, 'Le Manteau mal taille': an English rendering of this, entitled 'The Boy and the Mantle,' is found in Percy's *Reliques*. And in Spenser we have the girdle of Florimel.

II. To the first subdivision (*a*) of the second group of variants, in which there is no test of chastity, but the suitors are entrapped, belongs the *fabliau* in Barbazan, tom. iii., of 'Constant du Hamel, ou la Dame qui atrappa un Prêtre, un Prévost, et un Forestier,' an abstract of which will be found in the original notes to our story; also the old ballad of *The Friar well-fitted*, of which some account is furnished by Dr Furnivall in an additional Postscript to his Preface (Second Edition, 1869).[1]

In an imperfect MS. text of the *Book of the Thousand and One Nights*, brought from Constantinople by Wortley Montagu, and now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, there are two versions: Nights 726-728, 'The Lady of Cairo and her Three Gallants,' and Nights 738-743, 'The Virtuous Woman of Cairo and her Four Suitors.' Dr Jonathan Scott has given a translation of the second of these in the sixth volume of his edition of the *Arabian Nights:* The lady is solicited by the judge, the collector-general of port-duties, the chief of the butchers, and a rich merchant. She makes an assignation with each

[1] For members of the E. E. T. S. who possess only the 1865 edition, it may be as well to reproduce Dr Furnivall's note here:

"With *The Wright's Chaste Wife* may also be compared the ballad of '*The Fryer well-fitted;* or

A Pretty jest that once befel,
How a maid put a Fryer to cool in the well,'

printed 'in the Bagford Collection; in the Roxburghe (ii, 172); the Pepys (iii. 145); the Douce (p. 85); and in *Wit and Mirth, an Antidote to Melancholy*, 8vo, 1682, also, in an altered form, in *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, 1707, i. 340, or 1719, iii. 325'; and the tune of which, with an abstract of the story, is given in Chappell's *Popular Music*, i. 273-5. The Friar makes love to the maid; she refuses him for fear of hell-fire.

Tush, quoth the Friar, thou needest not doubt;
If thou wert in Hell, I could sing thee out.

So she consents if he'll bring her an angel of money. He goes home to fetch it, and she covers the well with a cloth. When he comes back and has given her the money, she pretends that her father is coming, tells the Friar to run behind the cloth, and down he flops into the well. She won't help him at first, because if he could sing her out of hell, he could clearly sing himself out of the well: but at last she does help him out, keeps his money because he's dirtied the water, and sends him home dripping along the street like a new-washed sheep."

at her own house—of course at different hours—and acquaints her husband of her plan to punish them, and at the same time reap some profit. The judge comes first, and presents her with a rosary of pearls. She makes him undress, and put on a robe of yellow muslin, and a parti-coloured cap—her husband all the time looking at him through an opening in the door of a closet. Presently a loud knock is heard at the street-door, and on the pretence that it is her husband, the judge is pushed into an adjoining room. The three other suitors, as they successively arrive, bring each a valuable present, and are treated in like manner. The husband now enters, and the lady tells him—to the consternation, doubtless, of the imprisoned suitors—that in returning from the bazaar she had met four antic fellows, whom she had a great mind to bring home with her for his amusement. He affects to be vexed that she had not done so, since he must go from home to-morrow. The lady then says they are, after all, in the next room, upon which the husband insists on their being brought before him, one after another. So the judge is dragged forth in his absurd attire, and compelled to caper like a buffoon, after which he is made to tell a story, and is then dismissed. The others, having in turn gone through a similar performance, are also sent packing.

There is another Arabian version in the famous romance of the *Seven Vazírs*, which now forms part of the *Thousand and One Nights*. The wife of a merchant, during one of his journeys of business, had a young man as a substitute, who happened one day to be engaged in a street brawl, and was apprehended by the police. She dressed herself in her richest apparel, and repaired to the walí, or chief of the police, and begged him to release her 'brother,' who was her only protector, and against whom hired witnesses had sworn falsely. The walí, seeing her great beauty, consents, on condition that she should receive him at her house. She appoints a certain evening, and the walí, enraptured, gives her twenty dínars (about ten pounds of our money), saying, "Expend this at the bath;" and so she left the walí with his heart busy thinking of all her charms. In like manner—to be brief—the lady arranges with the kází, or judge, the vazír, or minister of state, and the hájib, or city governor, that they should come to her the same evening, appointing, of course, a different hour for each. She then goes to a joiner, and desires him to make her a large cabinet with four compartments. The poor craftsman, also smitten with her beauty, asks, as his only reward, that he should be permitted to spend an evening with her. "In that case," says she, "you must make a fifth compartment," and appointed an

hour for him to visit her, the same evening she had fixed for the four city officials. When the walí arrived, she feasted him abundantly, then taking off his robes, dressed him in gay-coloured clothes, and plied him with wine till he was intoxicated; and when he had written an order to the jailor to release the young man, lo! there was a loud knocking at the gate. "Who is coming?" asks the walí, in alarm. "It is my husband," replies the lady; "get into this cabinet, and I will return presently and let you out." Thus, as they came, the crafty lady entraps the four dignitaries and the poor joiner. Having sent a servant to the prison with the walí's order, her lover soon arrived, and they both set off for another city, with all the valuables they could carry. In the morning the landlord of the house, finding the gate open, entered, and hearing voices from the cabinet was alarmed, and summoned the neighbours. The cabinet was carried to the palace of the sultan, who sent for carpenters and smiths, and caused it to be broken open, when lo! he discovered the walí, the kází, the vazír, the hájib, and the poor joiner in their fantastic dresses. And the sultan laughed till he almost fainted, and commanded the story to be written from first to last. Search was made for the lady and her lover, but they were never discovered.[1]

In the Persian romance entitled *Bahár-i Dánish*, or 'Spring of Knowledge,' by Ináyatu-'llah of Delhi, a lady named Gohera, whose husband was in the hands of the police, makes assignations with the kôtwal (chief of police) and the kází, one of whom is entrapped in a great jar, the other in a chest; and next morning she causes porters to carry them before the sultan, who orders them to be punished, and her husband to be set at liberty. And in the Persian tales of the 'Thousand and One Days' (*Hazár-yek Rúz*), by Mukhlis, of Ispahán (Day 146 ff.), Arúya, the virtuous wife of a merchant, entraps, with her husband's sanction, a judge, a doctor, and the city governor.

The story is known, in various forms, throughout India, where, indeed, it had its origin. In the *Indian Antiquary*, 1873, there is a translation by G. H. Damant, of a folk-tale of Dinajpur, entitled 'The Touchstone,' in the concluding portion of which a young woman consents to receive at her house the kôtwal at the first watch of the night; the king's counsellor at the second watch; the king's minister at the third watch; and the king himself at the fourth watch. She smears the kôtwal with molasses, pours water on him, covers his whole body with cotton wool, and then secures him near the window.

[1] In the Bodleian MS. of *The Nights* referred to above, this story is told separately from the *Seven Vazírs*.—*Nights*, 726—728.

The counsellor is hidden under a mat; the minister behind a bamboo-screen; and when the king comes, last of all, and sees the frightful figure of the kôtwal in the window, he asks what it is, and she replies that it is a rákshasa (a species of demon), upon which the king, minister, and counsellor flee from the house in dread of the monster. The kôtwal is then released, and makes the best of his way home in his hideous condition.

In Miss Stokes' charming *Indian Fairy Tales* (No. 28), a merchant's clever wife, during his absence, takes four hanks of thread to the bazaar to sell, and is accosted in turn by the kôtwal, the vazír, the kází, and the king, to each of whom she grants an interview at her house, at different hours, and contrives to entrap them into chests. In the morning she hires four stout coolies, who take the chests on their backs, and proceeding to the houses of her suitors, disposes of them to their sons for various sums of money, telling each that the chest contained something he would value far beyond the sum she asked. A very similar Bengalí version, 'Adi's Wife,' is given by Damant in the *Indian Antiquary*," vol. ix. p. 2. And there is a curious variant in Narrain Sawmy's *Select Tamil Tales*, Madras, 1839, in which Ramakistnan (an Indian Scogin or Tyl Eulenspiegel) entraps the rája and his domestic chaplain, whom he induces to disguise themselves as women, on the pretext that he would introduce them to the beautiful wife of a man who had lately come to lodge at his house. The jester having locked them, one after the other, in the same room, when they recognize each other they are much ashamed, and softly request to be let out, but this Ramakistnan does only after they have solemnly promised to forgive him a hundred offences every day.

We now come to a second Sanskrit form of the story in the *Kathá Sarit Ságara* (Book I. ch. 4), from which the foregoing Indian, Persian, and Arabian versions have evidently been adapted or imitated. The storyteller, Vararuchi, relates that before proceeding to Himálaya to propitiate Siva with austerities, he deposited in the hand of the merchant Hiranyadatta all his wealth for the maintenance of his family during his absence, at the same time informing his wife Upakosá of it, and he thus proceeds:

"Upakosá, on her part anxious for my success, remained in her own house, bathing every day in the Ganges, strictly observing her vow. One day, when spring had come, she being still beautiful, though thin and slightly pale, and charming to the eyes of men, like the streak of the new moon, was seen by the king's domestic chaplain

while going to bathe in the Ganges, and also by the head magistrate, and by the prince's minister; and immediately they all became a target for the arrows of love. It happened, too, somehow or other, that she took a long time bathing that day, and as she was returning in the evening, the prince's minister laid violent hands on her; but she with great presence of mind said to him: 'Dear sir, I desire this as much as you, but I am of respectable family, and my husband is away from home. How can I act thus? Some one might perhaps see us, and then misfortune would befall you as well as me. Therefore you must come without fail to my house in the first watch of the night of the spring-festival, when the citizens are all excited [and will not observe you].' When she had said this, and pledged herself, he let her go; but as chance would have it, she had not gone many steps further before she was stopped by the king's domestic chaplain. She made a similar assignation with him also, for the second watch of the same night; and so he too was, though with difficulty, induced to let her go. But after she had gone a little further, up comes a third person, the head magistrate, and detains the trembling lady. Then she made a similar assignation with him also, for the third watch of the same night; and having by great good fortune got him to release her, she went home all trembling. Of her own accord she told her handmaids the arrangements she had made, reflecting, 'Death is better for a woman of good family, when her husband is away, than to meet the eyes of people who lust after beauty.' Full of these thoughts and regretting me, the virtuous lady spent that night in fasting, lamenting her own beauty.

"Early the next morning she sent a maidservant to the merchant Hiranyadatta to ask for some money in order that she might honour the Bráhmans. Then that merchant also came, and said to her in private: 'Show me love, and then I will give you what your husband deposited.' When she heard that, she reflected that she had no witness to prove the deposit of her husband's wealth, and perceived that the merchant was a villain; and so, tortured with sorrow and grief, she made a fourth and last assignation with him for the last watch of the same night; and so he went away. In the meanwhile she had prepared by her handmaids, in a large vat, lamp-black mixed with oil and scented with musk and other perfumes, and she made ready four pieces of rag anointed with it, and she caused to be made a large trunk with a fastening outside.

"So on that day of the spring-festival the prince's minister came in the first watch of the night in gorgeous array. When he had

entered without being observed, Upakosá said to him: 'I will not receive you until you have bathed; so go in and bathe.' The simpleton agreed to that, and was taken by the handmaids into a secret, dark inner apartment. There they took off his under-garments and his jewels, and gave him by way of an under-garment a single piece of rag, and they smeared the rascal from head to foot with a thick coating of that lamp-black and oil, pretending it was an unguent, without his detecting it. While they continued rubbing it into every limb, the second watch of the night came, and the chaplain arrived; the handmaids thereupon said to the minister: 'Here is the king's chaplain come, a great friend of Vararuchi's, so creep into this box;' and they bundled him into the trunk, just as he was, all naked, with the utmost precipitation; and then they fastened it outside with a bolt. The priest too was brought inside into the dark room on the pretence of a bath, and was in the same way stripped of his garments and ornaments, and made a fool of by the handmaids by being rubbed with lamp-black and oil, with nothing but the piece of rag on him, until in the third watch the chief magistrate arrived. The handmaids immediately terrified the priest with the news of his arrival, and pushed him into the trunk like his predecessor. After they had bolted him in, they brought in the magistrate on the pretext of giving him a bath, and so he, like his fellows, with the piece of rag for his only garment, was bamboozled by being continually anointed with lamp-black, until in the last watch of the night the merchant arrived. The handmaids made use of his arrival to alarm the magistrate, and bundled him also into the trunk, and fastened it on the outside.

"So those three being shut up inside the box, as if they were bent on accustoming themselves to live in the hell of blind darkness, did not dare to speak on account of fear, though they touched one another. Then Upakosá brought a lamp into the room, and making the merchant enter it, said to him: 'Give me that money which my husband deposited with you.' When he heard that, the rascal, observing that the room was empty, said: 'I told you that I would give you the money your husband deposited with me.' Upakosá, calling the attention of the people in the trunk, said: 'Hear, O ye gods, this speech of Hiranyadatta.' When she had said this, she blew out the light; and the merchant, like the others, on the pretext of a bath was anointed by the handmaids for a long time with lamp-black. Then they told him to go, for the darkness was over, and at the close of the night they took him by the neck and pushed him out of the door sorely against his will. Then he made the best of his way home,

with only the piece of rag to cover his nakedness, and smeared with the black dye, with the dogs biting him at every step, thoroughly ashamed of himself, and at last reached his own house; and when he got there, he did not dare to look his slaves in the face while they were washing off that black dye. The path of vice is indeed a painful one.

"In the early morning, Upakosá, accompanied by her handmaids, went, without informing her parents, to the palace of King Nanda, and there herself stated to the king that the merchant Hiranyadatta was endeavouring to deprive her of money deposited with him by her husband. The king, in order to inquire into the matter, immediately had the merchant summoned, who said: 'I have nothing in my keeping belonging to this lady.' Upakosá then said: 'I have witnesses, my lord. Before he went, my husband put the household gods into a box, and this merchant with his own lips admitted the deposit in their presence. Let the box be brought here, and ask the gods yourself.' Having heard this, the king in astonishment ordered the box to be brought. Thereupon in a moment that trunk was carried in by many men. Then Upakosá said: 'Relate truly, O gods, what that merchant said, and then go to your houses: if you do not, I will burn you, or open the box in court.' Hearing that, the men in the box, beside themselves with fear, said: 'It is true, the merchant admitted the deposit in our presence.' Then the merchant, being utterly confounded, confessed all his guilt. But the king, being unable to restrain his curiosity, after asking permission of Upakosá, opened the chest there in court by breaking the fastening, and those three men were dragged out, looking like three lumps of solid darkness, and were with difficulty recognised by the king and his ministers. The whole assembly then burst out laughing, and the king in his curiosity asked Upakosá what was the meaning of this; so the virtuous lady told the whole story. All present in court expressed their approbation of Upakosá's conduct, observing: 'The virtuous behaviour of women of good family, who are protected by their own excellent disposition only,[1] is incredible.' Then all those coveters of their neighbour's wife were deprived of all their living and banished from the country. Who prospers by immorality? Upakosá was then dismissed by the king, who showed his great regard for her by a present of much wealth, and said to her: 'Henceforth thou art my sister;' and so she returned home."

[1] Instead of being confined in the zenana, or harem. Somadeva wrote before the Muhammadan conquest of India.

Such is the fine story of the virtuous Upakosá, according to Professor Tawney's translation, of which the Arabian version in the *Seven Vazírs* is a rather clumsy imitation. But before attempting a comparison of the several versions, there remain to be adduced those of the second subdivision (*b*) of the group in which there is no magical test of chastity, and to which belongs Lydgate's metrical tale of *The Lady Prioress and her Three Wooers*, an abstract of which is cited by Dr Furnivall in the original notes to our story.

If Lydgate did not adapt his tale from Boccaccio (*Decameron*, Day IX., Nov. 1), both versions must have been derived from a common source. Boccaccio's story is to this effect: A widow lady in Pistoia had two lovers, one called Rinuccio, the other Alexander, of whom neither was acceptable to her. At a time when she was harassed by their importunities, a person named Scannadio, of reprobate life and hideous aspect, died and was buried. His death suggested to the lady a mode of getting rid of her lovers, by asking them to perform a service which she thought herself certain they would not undertake. She acquainted Alexander that the body of Scannadio, for a purpose she would afterwards explain, was to be brought to her dwelling, and that, as she felt a horror at receiving such an inmate, she offered him her love if he would attire himself in the dead garments of Scannadio, occupy his place in the coffin, and allow himself to be conveyed to her house in his stead. To Rinuccio she sent to request that he would bring the corpse of Scannadio at midnight to her habitation. Both lovers, contrary to her expectation, agree to fulfil her desires. During the night she watches the event, and soon perceives Rinuccio coming along, bearing Alexander, who was equipped in the shroud of Scannadio. On the approach of some watchmen with a light, Rinuccio throws down his burden and runs off, while Alexander returns home in the dead man's clothes. Next day each demands the love of his mistress, which she refuses, pretending to believe that no attempt had been made to fulfil her commands (*Dunlop*). Lydgate's story is a very great improvement on this of the illustrious Florentine: the Lady Prioress pretends the "corpse" had been arrested for debt; and the adventures of her three suitors are ingeniously conceived, and told with much humour.

Under the title of 'The Wicked Lady of Antwerp and her Lovers,' Thorpe, in his *Northern Mythology*, gives a story which is cousin-german to those of Boccaccio and Lydgate: A rich woman in Antwerp led a very licentious life, and had four lovers, all of whom visited her in the evenings, but at different hours, so that no one

knew anything of the others. The Long Wapper[1] one night assumed the form of this lady. At ten o'clock came the first lover, and Long Wapper said to him: "What dost thou desire?"—"I desire you for a wife," said the spark.—"Thou shalt have me," replied the Wapper, "if thou wilt go instantly to the churchyard of our Lady, and there sit for two hours on the transverse of the great cross."—"Good," said he, "that shall be done," and he went and did accordingly. At half-past ten came the second. "What dost thou want?" asked the Long Wapper.—"I wish to marry you," answered the suitor.—"Thou shalt have me," replied the Wapper, "if thou wilt go previously to the churchyard of our Lady, there take a coffin, drag it to the foot of the great cross, and lay thyself in it till midnight."—"Good," said the lover, "that shall be done at once," and he went and did so. About eleven o'clock came the third. Him the Long Wapper commissioned to go to the coffin at the foot of the cross in our Lady's churchyard, to knock thrice on the lid, and to wait there till midnight. At half-past eleven came the fourth, and Wapper asked him what his wishes were. "To wed you," answered he.—"Thou shalt do so," replied Wapper, "if thou wilt take the iron chain in the kitchen, and dragging it after thee, run three times round the cross in the churchyard of our Lady."—"Good," said the spark, "that I will do." The first had set himself on the cross, but had fallen dead with fright to the earth on seeing the second place the coffin at his feet. The second died with fright when the third struck thrice on the coffin. The third fell down dead when the fourth came rattling his chain, and the fourth knew not what to think when he found his three rivals lying stiff and cold around the cross. With all speed he ran from the churchyard to the lady to tell her what had happened. But she, of course, knew nothing of the matter; when, however, on the following day, she was informed of the miserable death of her lovers, she put an end to her own life.

We have here a very curious and tragical version of the self-same story which the Monk of Bury—or whosoever was the author—has told so amusingly of the Lady Prioress and her Three Wooers. In the Far North, where our story is also current, magical arts are employed in punishment of importunate and objectionable suitors: In the latter part of the tale of 'The Mastermaid' (Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse*), the heroine takes shelter in the hut of a crabbed old crone, who is killed by an accident, and the maid

[1] A Flemish sprite, whose knavish exploits resemble those of our English Robin Goodfellow.—*Thorpe.*

is thus left alone. A constable, passing by, and seeing a beautiful girl at the window, falls in love with her, and having brought a bushel of money, she consents to marry him; but at night, just when they have got into bed, she says that she has forgot to make up the fire; this the doting bridegroom undertakes to do himself, but no sooner has he laid hold of the shovel, than she cries out: "May you hold the shovel, and the shovel hold you, and may you heap burning coals over yourself till morning breaks!" So there stood the constable all night, heaping coals of fire on his own head till day-break, when he was released from the spell, and ran home. In like manner, on the second night the damsel casts her spells over an attorney, who is made to hold the handle of the porch-door till morning; and on the third night the sheriff is compelled to hold the calf's-tail, and the calf's-tail to hold him, till morning breaks, when he goes home in sorry plight.—In an Icelandic version, the calf's-tail is the only device adopted by the young witch, but it proves equally efficacious for her purposes.

These are all the versions of this world-wide story with which I am at present acquainted: some of them are taken from the appendix to my privately-printed *Book of Sindibád*. Regarding the immediate source of Adam of Cobsam's diverting tale, I do not think that was the *Gesta* version, with which it corresponds only in outline; both were doubtless adapted independently from some orally-current form of the story. If we assume that the *Kathá Sarit Ságara* faithfully represents its prototype of the 6th century—the *Vrihat Kathá*—then for the elements of *The Wright's Chaste Wife* we must go to two different but cognate tales in that collection: for the garland as the test of chastity we have the lotus-flower in the story of Guhasena; and the entrapping of the suitors we find in the story of Upakosá. Of the Eastern versions cited, the prototype of *The Wright's Chaste Wife* is the story of the soldier's wife in the *Tútí Náma*—a work, it is true, which does not date earlier than A.D. 1306, but it was derived from a much older Persian work of the same description, which again was based upon a Sanskrit story-book, of which the *Suka Saptati* (Seventy Tales of a Parrot) is the modern representative. The two stories in the *Vrihat Kathá*—or rather, portions of them—seem thus to have been fused into one at an early date, and reached Europe in a form similar to the *Gesta* and Adam of Cobsam's versions. But the story of Upakosá also found its way to Europe separately, and not through the Arabian versions assuredly, since these are much later than the times of the Trouvères. Moreover, the

fabliau has preserved incidents of the Indian story, which are omitted in the Arabian versions, with comparatively little modification, namely: that of the bath—a common preliminary to farther intimacy in tales of gallantry; the smearing of the naked suitors with lamp-black and oil—they are 'feathered' in the *fabliau;* and the dogs snapping the heels of the roguish merchant.—That Boccaccio was not the inventor of his version seems evident, from the existence of analogous popular tales in Northern Europe. Be this as it may, Adam of Cobsam's story has furnished us with a curious illustration of Baring-Gould's remark: "How many brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins of all degrees a little story has! and how few of the tales we listen to can lay any claim to originality!"

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